

I B S

VOLUME 7 APRIL 1985



IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Subscription for 1985 (inclusive of postage):

Individuals £5.75 sterling or 7 Irish pounds

Institutions £8 sterling; US \$ 14.50

Design on Cover by Rev Aylmer Armstrong, the
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PESHAT AND DERASH IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN¹

D.R.G. Beattie

The two terms *peshat* and *derash* are properly at home in Jewish Bible exegesis, where *peshat* signifies the ordinary, plain, straightforward meaning of a text while *derash* signifies homiletic exposition. In the mediaeval rabbinic commentaries the distinction between the two principles is frequently drawn clearly. To take a simple example from the book of Ruth, the sudden (and, presumably, untimely) death of Elimelech was interpreted in ancient times as a divine punishment for his selfishness in emigrating from Judah at a time of famine and thereby evading his responsibility, as a wealthy man and a leader of the community, towards the poor, who were more seriously affected by the famine than he. This view is recorded in the talmud and in the midrashim Ruth Rabbah and Ruth Zuta, and it was taken up from these sources by the great 11th-century commentator Rashi. A generation or so after Rashi, an anonymous commentator, who may have been a pupil of Rashi's son-in-law Rashbam, having cited Rashi's comment to this effect in his own commentary, continues,

"but this is not commonsense (*peshat*). It was not out of selfishness that Elimelech emigrated but because of the famine. It says (of Naomi) that she returned from the field of Moab when she heard in the field of Moab that God had visited his people to give them bread, and from this we see that it was on account of the famine that he (Elimelech) emigrated".²

In other words, if I may presume to have the mind of this commentator, to turn the briefly noticed death of Elimelech into a homily against selfishness is all very well, but the assertion that this man died in consequence of divine retribution is not in accord with the plain statements of the biblical text.

Rashi, although he may appear to have been caught on the hop in this particular instance, has often been eulogized for his devotion to the principle of *peshat* in his biblical commentaries taken as a whole. At the head of his commentary on the Song of Songs he enunciates an important principle of exegesis:

"A text may have many meanings, but in the final analysis 'the text does not lose its ordinary meaning'".

And so he proceeds, in commenting on that book, to distinguish clearly between the literal meaning of individual texts and the allegorical meanings they had been given in Jewish tradition. When he cites the latter they are clearly marked "allegorical interpretation".

The statement used by Rashi, "the text does not lose its ordinary meaning", is a maxim which appears in several places in the Talmud and which, I feel, might with profit be heard more frequently on the lips of contemporary exegetes. Perhaps in to-day's world we might cast it in a more positive form, and I would propose, "the text means what it says".³

In one of the places where this maxim is used in the Talmud, *b. Shab. 63a*, there is an interesting situation. It occurs in the course of a discussion as to whether or not a sword, or other weapon, is a proper accoutrement for a man. Majority opinion thought not, since all weapons are to disappear in the Messianic age, beaten into ploughshares and pruning-hooks, but in support of the contrary point of view Ps 45:4 was quoted:

"Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and your majesty",

whereupon R. Kahana protested that "sword" in this verse does not mean "sword" but is a reference to the words of the Torah.

"A verse cannot depart from its plain meaning", he

was told, and to this he responded, "By the time I was 18 years old I had studied the whole Shas,⁴ yet I did not know until today that a verse cannot depart from its literal meaning".

I cite this passage because it seems to me that there are still today many in the position of R. Kahana, who have never considered the elementary point that a text of scripture should be understood to mean what it says. Why it should be so I do not know. Perhaps, as with R. Kahana, no-one has ever made the point explicitly to them, but sometimes it would appear that disregard of *peshat* follows in consequence of a presupposition that the Bible ought to say certain things, ought not to say certain other things, and therefore, in certain cases, cannot possibly be taken seriously as meaning what it says.

One place in particular where one frequently encounters a blinkered outlook on the part of bible exegetes is the narrative of the Garden of Eden, Gen 2-3 (which brings me back to the title of my paper). If I may trace briefly the line of thought which led me to produce this paper, I must begin by referring to another paper read to this Group a couple of years ago by my colleague, Dr Wenham. That paper was called "Faith in the Pentateuch", and I quote from it.

"If we look ... to Genesis 2, we find another situation in which God spoke to man but did not find a response of faith. God gave a command and a warning. 'You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for the day you eat of it you shall die'. The serpent questions God's statement: 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. Though everything the serpent said came true in one sense, it had the effect of making the woman prefer her opinion to her creator's and disobey him."

I have no wish to controvert the main tenor of this passage, though perhaps I may suggest that Dr Wenham was dealing, for his main theme, in *derash* - the homiletic application of the narrative - rather than in *peshat* - the exegesis of its primary sense. On hearing this read I was struck by, and prompted to reflect upon, the statement that "what the serpent said came true in one sense". I wondered, in particular, about the qualification "in one sense", for I was, and still am, at a loss to know in what sense it did not "come true". It seems to me that what the serpent said was true, full stop.

A brief look at three or four verses from the story should suffice to establish this point. First there is 2:17, in which God told Adam, "Don't eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge good and bad (or, knowledge of all sorts), because, as soon as you ate it you would die".⁵ Then there is 3:4,5, in which the snake refutes this statement, "You would not die at all. God knows that as soon as you ate this fruit your eyes would be opened and you would become like God (or, gods), knowing good and bad (or, all sorts of things)". The veracity of this statement is borne out in two stages. First, in verse 7, where we read "the eyes of both of them were opened", and then later, in verse 22, where God acknowledges, "The man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad".

From reflecting on Dr Wenham's statement I proceeded to dip into half a dozen commentaries on Genesis, and I was quite astonished at some of the things I found there. Von Rad⁶ came first to hand. On Gen 3:4,5 he tells us,

"... the serpent can now drop the mask behind which it had pretended earnest concern for God's direction. No longer does it ask, but asserts with unusual stylistic emphasis that what God said was not true at all, and it gives reasons too ... It imputes grudging intentions to God. It uses the ancient and

widespread idea of the god's envy to cast suspicion on God's good command".

So far so good (aside from minor quibbles which might be raised about the mask at the beginning and the value judgement on God's command at the end of the quotation) but then von Rad asserts,

"The serpent neither lied nor told the truth. One has always seen in the half-truth the cunning of its statement".

This assertion is not further explained and what von Rad meant by it is a mystery to me. Certainly I am unable to see where the half-truth (or, for that matter, the half-untruth) lies.

Next I looked at Kidner's commentary⁷ and found that he, in contrast to von Rad's equivocation, is positive in his opinion about the serpent's speech. Commenting on 3:4 he says,

"After the query, the flat contradiction: Ye shall not surely die (AV,RV). It is the serpent's word against God's and the first doctrine to be denied is judgement."

I am not at all sure what he is trying to say here, but he apparently chooses to favour God rather than the serpent for he continues, commenting on 3:5,

"The climax is a lie big enough to re-interpret life (this breadth is the power of a false system) and dynamic enough to redirect the flow of affection and ambition".

I am perplexed by the metaphysics of this passage but the first five words seem clear enough. Kidner is asserting that the serpent's statement "you will not die" is a great big lie. Yet he later admits, albeit grudgingly, that "the serpent's promise of eyes ...

opened came true in its fashion", and refers to verse 22. He never explains what the asserted lie consists of. Instead, in his comment on 3:7, he observes,

"The opening of this verse, utterly unexpected after 2:17, forces the reader to examine the meaning of the death that was threatened therein",

and he cites Augustine,

"If it be asked what death God threatened man with ... whether ... bodily or spiritual or that second death, we answer: It was all ... He comprehends therein, not only the first part of the first death, wheresoever the soul loses God, nor the latter only, wherein the soul leaves the body ... but also ... the second which is the last of deaths, eternal, and following after all".

Now, I know nothing of gradations in death (and am not a little puzzled by Augustine's arithmetical reckoning) but if this is being offered as an exegesis of Gen 2:17 it is putting far more weight on the narrator's words than they can reasonably be expected to bear. But whatever Augustine may have meant, Kidner, in citing him, has quite simply put up a smokescreen and run away.

Still hoping to find a satisfactory treatment of Gen 2-3, I roamed further afield amongst the commentaries. Commenting on Gen 3, as a unit, Speiser⁹ says,

"On the evidence of vs. 22 the serpent was right in saying that God meant to withhold from man the benefits of the tree of knowledge (vs. 5); the same purpose is now attributed to Yahweh".

However, he (Speiser) seems unwilling to admit that the serpent was speaking the truth, and God lying, in their

statements about the effects of eating the forbidden fruit. At 2:17 he translates,

"For the moment you eat of it you shall be doomed to die",

and he notes, in support of this rendering,

"Death did not result in this instance. The point of the whole narrative is apparently man's ultimate punishment rather than instantaneous death",

but his translation, although it may allow both Yahweh and the serpent to speak truthfully, is not tenable in view of other elements in the story. In the first place, the expression "in the day" surely implies an immediate consequence. Secondly, if the man became mortal only in consequence of his action in eating the forbidden fruit, what is the tree of life all about? 3:22 implies that Adam is, and has been all along, mortal; he may become immortal by eating the fruit of the tree of life and this is what Yahweh must guard against by expelling him from the garden. It may, incidentally, be noted here that the expulsion from the garden is not part of the punishment; it is explicitly stated that this was a precaution on God's part. The man's punishment for eating the fruit is described in his condemnation to scratching a living from the soil.

Skinner⁹ had a radical treatment for the problem: a combination of haggadah and textual surgery. He explains the non-fulfilment of God's threat of instantaneous death on the supposition "that God, having regard to the circumstances of the temptation, changed his purpose and modified the penalty". This is pure haggadah, having no basis in the biblical narrative. He refers to the serpent's speech of 3:4,5 as a "lying insinuation" and when he comes to 3:22 he refuses to accept that the writer of verse 5 "would have justified the serpent's insinuation, even in form, by a divine utterance". He proposes to attribute this verse (22) to a "secondary

recension" which "represents a cruder form of the legend than does the main narrative". His presupposition is showing, and it is not a pretty sight.

Cassuto's¹⁰ presuppositions are even more evident than those of Skinner. He is determined to uphold the veracity of God's statement, "In the day that you eat of it you shall die", because, as he says (yes, he actually says), "[it is not] conceivable that the Bible attributed to the Lord God an extravagant utterance that did not correspond to his true intention". Yet, he recognizes that there is a problem inherent in the wording "when you eat it you shall die", because Adam did not die at that time. He opposes six explanations proposed by others (including that of Skinner mentioned above that God changed his mind in view of the circumstances) and suggests that

"the natural meaning of the words ... [is]: when you eat of the tree of knowledge it shall be decreed against you never to be able to eat of the tree of life, that is, you will be unable to achieve eternal life and you will be compelled one day to succumb to death; *you shall die*, in actual fact. It was necessary to use simple words like *you shall die*, because prior to his eating of the tree of knowledge man was as unsophisticated as a child who knows nothing, and he could not have comprehended a more elaborate warning".

Mental and verbal gymnastics of this kind are totally unnecessary. It is much more reasonable to say that "you shall die" means "you shall die" and that this statement was a lie, was recognized as such by the snake (which means a snake - Cassuto understands it rather as "an allegorical allusion to the craftiness to be found in man himself") and as good as admitted to be such by God later on.

On turning to Gunkel's commentary¹¹ I thought at

first that I had at last encountered commonsense, but, alas, I find my idol in danger of toppling off his pedestal. Gunkel tells us that the main point of Gen 2:17 is that

"the man must not eat of the tree of knowledge; he would certainly die in the day that (as soon as) he ate it. The words could be understood as meaning that the fruit itself is poisonous, but also as meaning - and this lies further behind the words but was indeed intended by the narrator - that God wishes to punish transgression with death. This threat is not subsequently carried out: they do not die immediately: this state of affairs is not to be explained away but simply to be recognized. The difficulty which modern exegetes find in this non-fulfilment of the divine words was not felt so strongly by the ancient narrator; rather would he answer, 'God is and remains master of his word, later he "repented" of the word; indeed he is seen therein to have a particular compassion in that he allows the word to go without fulfilment' ... Nevertheless it remains noteworthy that the serpent, in 3:4, can flatly give the lie to God and that the narrator allows no word to be said in explanation of the whole sequence ... Why God forbade the eating of this tree under so terrible a penalty the narrator does not say but he puts it forward as self-evident".

Now, there are one or two good points in all of this; the recognition that the words of 2:17 can mean that the fruit is poisonous, and his advocating simple acceptance of the fact that death does not follow immediately and automatically on the eating of the fruit. Yet Gunkel creates for himself problems - of the reason for God's making so terrible a threat, and of the threat's not being carried out - which may be solved

simply by a judicious stroke of Ockham's razor. No problem arises in connection with God's threat of death as a punishment because there was no such threat. The words of 2:17 should be taken simply and solely in the first sense suggested by Gunkel - the fruit is poisonous, to eat it means death.

Finally, I came to the commentary of Westermann.¹² He opposes the translations of 2:17 offered by Speiser and Cassuto, which attempted to make *moth tamuth* mean something other than "you will/would die", and he agrees with Gunkel that the problem found by modern exegetes in the non-fulfilment of the threat of death is a problem which would not have been recognized by the narrator. Indeed, he takes a step closer to commonsense when he disputes that there was any threat of death at all.

"The death penalty", he says, "has no intrinsically threatening sense. In the context it has rather the sense of a warning. It makes the people guard against eating from the tree. After the people have eaten from the tree a new situation arises. In this situation God behaves differently than he had earlier announced."¹³ This 'inconsistency' of God is important for the story; it points out that God's dealings with his creatures cannot be determined, not even through previously spoken words of God".

The two points in this passage - that the "death penalty" is a warning, not a threat, and that God is unpredictable - are the most sensible statements I have yet read in my combings through commentaries on Genesis. Yet, on the precise point of the truth or untruth of the two statements, by God and the snake respectively, that if the man and his wife ate the fruit of the tree they would die or they would not die, Westermann is as loath as any of the other commentators to grasp the nettle which I hold out to them.

Commenting on 3:4-5, he tells us that

"commentators are of different opinions as to whether God indeed told a lie or not; one thinks no exegete could vindicate God for this lie, another is enraged that anyone at all should entertain the idea that God could have told a lie".

This I find interesting. I have not yet encountered a member of the former group. All the commentators I have encountered seem to belong to the second camp. Westermann does not name representatives of either party, nor does he side with one faction or the other. He continues,

"But to assert, as well as to deny, that God lied is to fail to recognize the meaning of the text ... The stories which wish to present the origin of death are concerned with an intangible phenomenon; death does not allow itself clearly to be determined. God intends with his warning a connection between knowledge and death, which is deeply hidden".

I do not understand what Westermann is trying to say in this last sentence, but it seems to me that he is going astray in a desperate attempt to sit on a non-existent fence. In the first place it does not seem possible to argue that it is a misconstruction of the story to point to the truth of the snake's statement and the falsity of God's. Indeed, Westermann has already observed that the non-fulfilment of Yahweh's word is an important element in the story. In the second place I do not think that the story sets out to explain the origin of death. In a story saturated with aetiology, death is one thing that is not explained. The condition of mortality, as has already been observed, is presupposed by the motif of the tree of life.

* * *

I retire, discouraged, from the search for peshat

in contemporary commentaries, at least on this particular point, and I forbear, for the present, to investigate other areas, although two or three examples of places where one suspects that *peshat* may be equally disregarded come readily to mind. In the seven commentaries I have consulted I have encountered equivocation, flat assertions that black is white, and prodigious feats of intellectual gymnastics (I say nothing of the inconsistencies produced, within individual commentaries, in the process), all, as it seems, on account of a presupposition that God cannot tell a lie. I do not presume to know whether or not God is capable of lying, or whether or not, if he is capable, he is disposed to do so, but I do know that in this story he is represented as making a statement which was not true.

I think I have made a case for saying that something fundamental is lacking in contemporary bible exegesis. I have hinted already that the remedy for the faults I find lies in a return to the standards of the mediaeval rabbis in distinguishing clearly between exegesis of what is actually present in a text - *peshat* - and the use of that text for purposes other than exegetical - *derash*. I would like to go further, though I doubt whether it would be practicable. I would hope that it might be possible eventually to return to the standards of the Tannaim who drew up formal lists of principles of exegesis. We cannot, of course, simply resurrect the 13 principles of R. Ishmael or the 32 of R. Eliezer, because I, for one, would refuse to subscribe to such principles as *gematria* or *athbash* and have doubts even about the validity in scientific terms of some of the more sober principles. But if a comparable list of principles for scientific exegesis were to be drawn up, I would nominate for the first place on that list the rabbinic maxim '*eyn miqra' yotse' miy'de p'shuto*', "the scripture cannot lose its plain meaning", or "the bible means what it says". I do not know what further principles might follow this one. It may be that this one, like Hillel's Golden Rule, would be sufficient in itself and render others unnecessary.

NOTES

- 1 A revised version of a paper read to the Biblical Theology Group on 29th September 1977. The original version had a coda "On Gen 2-3", which became the basis for a paper read to the Society for Old Testament Study on 20th July 1978 and published in *The Expository Times* 92/1 (1980) pp. 8-10, under the title "What is Gen 2-3 About?" The main part of the original paper is here published for the first time.
- 2 See "Commentary of an Anonymous Rabbi", in D.R.G. Beattie, *Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Ruth*, JSOT Supplement Series 2, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1977, pp. 33-35, 114-134.
- 3 It must be admitted, in proposing this as a serious principle of exegesis, that there are, of course, places where it cannot be strictly applied: there are cases of metaphorical and other figurative expressions, poetic descriptions, and so on, of which we should not argue "the text means what it says"; but these are covered by another rabbinic dictum, "Scripture speaks in human language".
- 4 An acronym from shishah sedarim, "six orders" (scil. of the Mishnah).
- 5 If my translation of this verse seems novel it is, I suggest, because those responsible for the various English versions seem to have forgotten that English has a subjunctive mood.
- 6 G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Old Testament Library), London: SCM Press, 1963.
- 7 D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries), London: Tyndale Press, 1967.
- 8 E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Anchor Bible, 1), New York: Doubleday, 1964.

- 9 J. Skinner, *Genesis* (International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910.
- 10 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the book of Genesis*, 2 vols, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961-64.
- 11 H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, (31910) 1966.
- 12 C. Westermann, *Genesis* (Biblischer Kommentar 1), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974.
- 13 I offer my apologies to the reader for this Germanicism. My translations from German have tended to be rather literal, partly because of the difficulty which I experience in grasping the commentators' meanings, although this difficulty, as I have indicated in various places, is by no means confined to the German commentaries.

At the very moment of Jesus' death, when he yielded up his spirit with a great cry, Matthew in his passion narrative describes two apocalyptic signs or, more properly, apocalyptic events (τὰ γενόμενα 27.54). The first - the rending of the curtain of the Temple - has been the subject of much discussion, but the second is no less worthy of investigation. It reads:

.....and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

(27:51b-53)

Of the many questions which this pericope raises we shall focus our attention, as best we may, on two: What interpretation of Jesus' death is implied in this apocalypse, and what does this passage suggest about the advent of God's kingdom in the theology of Matthew?

Before we enter upon our redaction-critical investigation some preliminary observations on the passage which are of a more general kind are in order. (i) The brief apocalypse is the vehicle of a theological (and eschatological) interpretation of Jesus' death: to inquire as to its historicity would involve us in a host of pseudo-problems and cause us to lose sight of the true meaning. (ii) The vocabulary and imagery of the passage owe so much to Old Testament and inter-testamental traditions that it is conceivable that the pericope existed as a pre-Matthean apocalyptic fragment to which the evangelist has added redactional details (μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐνεφανίσθησαν πολλοῖς).

For instance the earthquake was, in the Old Testament and later Jewish apocalyptic writings, a common theme of theophany, when God would judge his enemies in wrath and rescue his faithful people by establishing his rule on earth (cf. Judg. 5:4, 2 Sam. 22:8 and Ps. 68:8) : the rending of the rocks, in conjunction with earthquake, recalls the Elijah episode narrated in 1 Kgs. 19:11. The opening of the tombs and the resurrection of the righteous formed part of the seemingly popular eschatology evidenced in Dan. 12:2, Isa. 26:19 and Ezek. 37:7, 12-14. The procession to the holy city may well have for long in tradition

been understood in terms of entry to the heavenly Jerusalem, an interpretation which seemed natural to many of the early Christian Fathers. Despite these parallels in content, little or nothing is gained by the hypothesis of an already existing apocalyptic fragment edited by Matthew: it is as likely, if not more so, that the evangelist himself brought together a number of well-known apocalyptic images in order to convey his own distinctive message. (iii) The signs or happenings which, according to these verses, follow upon Jesus' death and those associated with his resurrection (28:2-4) have obvious literary links. Both are introduced with the Matthean $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \iota\delta\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\iota$, which draws attention to their special importance. Each passage tells of an earthquake - a divine, revelatory intervention. And the two passages use the motif of fear to contrasting effect: the fear of the Roman guards leads to a confession of faith, whereas the fear of the Jewish guards later leaves them like dead men. It would seem that Matthew quite deliberately wanted his readers to link the death and the resurrection of Jesus in terms of their effects. (iv) Of particular importance for the language and meaning of 27:51-53 is Ezek.37:7,12-14 in the Greek translation: "And it came to pass that, as I prophesied, behold, there was an earthquake...Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I open your tombs and I shall lead you from your tombs and I shall lead you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your tombs to lead you, my people, from your tombs. And I shall give my spirit to you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land, and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken and will do it'" In the Judaism of Matthew's day this great prophetic vision of Israel's spiritual renewal was interpreted as a type or symbol of the messianic salvation, of God's inbreaking at the eschaton. Therefore Matthew 29:51b-53 is affirming that Jesus' death ~~is~~ the moment of God's eschatological intervention, which includes the general resurrection of the dead. Whether the saintly dead of Israel's past who rise at the death of Israel's Messiah are all the devout Israelites who died before Jesus, or a specially pious few (the patriarchs, or the martyrs, or the prophets, as in Ign.Magn.9)

is secondary to the striking declaration that the resurrection of the dead (prophesied by Ezekiel) has begun with the life-giving death of Jesus. But already we are anticipating the results of our investigation.

(v) According to the text, the resurrected saints entered Jerusalem only after Jesus' resurrection (μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ) and so it is asked:

did they come out of their tombs only after Jesus' resurrection, or did they come forth and wait around in the countryside till Jesus had risen? Apparently² exercised by the problem J. Wenham has suggested² that a full-stop or other strong punctuation be placed after ἀνεψύχθησαν and the rest of the verse treated as parenthetical, thus absolving Matthew from the charge of depicting living saints cooped up for days in tombs around the city: but this, in my view, is to break an established, eschatological sequence for the sake of solving a modern logical or quasi-historical problem. We may legitimately see in μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ a Matthean accommodation to the basic Christological affirmation that Christ was the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor.15:20), all the rest awaiting the general resurrection (1 Thess.4:16): but to say that is not to imply that this resurrection of the saints should or once did form the sequel to the earthquake at Jesus' resurrection (28:2) and was mistakenly recorded at this point: Matthew's theological purpose would be misunderstood on that view.

The Meaning of Matthew 27:51b-53

Mark had already invested the death of Jesus with apocalyptic overtones by mentioning the darkness at noon and the rending of the Temple veil. Matthew heightens the eschatological character of Jesus' death by the description of additional apocalyptic events. The rending of the Temple veil is accompanied by an earthquake, an apocalyptic motif Matthew adds to other passages in his gospel (8: 24 and 28:2). This "shattering of the foundations" of the old creation signifies God's definitive judgment - the passive voice indicates the agency of God - on

the old age (Amos 8:8-10,9:1) and the beginning of his restored cosmic rule. As E. Schweizer says, "God with his new world breaks into the old world, just as in 1 Kings 19:11 his appearance caused the earth to quake and the rocks of Horeb to split."³ What is distinctively Matthean is that what is earth-shaking, in the truest sense of the word, is Jesus' death.

The earthquake, however, is not an isolated sign. It sets off a chain-reaction: the earthquake splits the rocks, the splitting of the rocks opens the tombs, and the opening of the tombs allows the dead to come forth. That these verses represent one of the earliest expressions of the belief that Jesus went to the underworld directly after his death and there set the Old Testament saints free to share in the resurrection (cf. 1 Pet. 3:19, 4:16) seems unlikely: the words μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν cannot mean "after he had raised them". What Matthew is daringly and dramatically symbolizing is the truth that the death of Jesus is life-giving: the dead rise, so to speak, at the cross, and the promises of Ezek. 37 are fulfilled. It is possible that Matthew's use of the unusual phrase ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (lit. "delivered over the spirit") to describe Jesus' act of dying is intentional: the eschatological, life-giving spirit promised in Ezekiel's vision is actually conferred in Jesus' death. Be that as it may, the resurrection of the dead, prophesied by Ezekiel, is actualized (proleptically) in the death of Jesus. Nothing could be clearer than that the death of Jesus is for Matthew the pivotal eschatological event which includes the general resurrection of the dead. But for Matthew the death of Jesus is very skilfully tied together with his resurrection, as we have noticed: therefore it is not reading into Matthew to speak of his presenting the death/resurrection of Jesus as one apocalyptic event, the eschatological turning of the ages which ushers in the Kingdom of God in decisive form. The relationship of 27:51b-53 and the words found in John 5:29, "...the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs (ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις) will hear his (i.e. the Son of Man's) voice and come forth" must remain a matter for speculation. That there are similarities cannot be

denied, but whether these can be accounted for by suggesting that they derive ultimately from an original saying of Jesus⁴ is very problematic.

If indeed Matthew 27:51-53 proclaims the death/resurrection of Jesus as the moment of God's eschatological intervention into the world, then the Matthean theology of Jesus' death and resurrection poses the problem as to whether there is a definable theological interpretation of history in Matthew. To confront that question means that we have to look briefly at approaches to Matthew's "historical perspective", on the assumption that that terminology is appropriate to the work of the evangelist.

Matthew's Historical Perspective.

Scholars differ widely in their views about Matthew's historical perspective. For instance, G. Strecker⁵ claims that the delay of the Parousia forced Matthew, as it did second-generation Christians in general, to rethink the problem of historical time-past and future. In response to this delay Matthew (in Strecker's view) composes a "life of Jesus" and orders it as "the way of righteousness" in the history of salvation which spans three epochs. The "time of Jesus" (including John the Baptist and the disciples), the time of the exclusive mission to Israel, is the central epoch. This age, which ends with the death of Jesus, is preceded by the period of the Old Testament, the "time of the fathers and the prophets", ending with the rejection of Israel, and is followed by the "time of the church" (extending to the Parousia), the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles.⁶ The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 is no more than the visible manifestation of a rejection already realised. Matthew's Gospel therefore explicitly regards the past (Jesus' life) as past and so should be read christologically, not ecclesiologically.

H. Frankemölle's position in Jahwebund und Kirche Christi⁷ is radically different. Matthew's Gospel in his view has no real historical interest in past

events. What looks like history is actually narrative fiction designed solely to speak to the situation of Matthew's own day and his readers' interests. Being quite unconcerned with the bruta facta of the immediate past, Matthew consistently "dehistoricizes" his tradition (of narrative and discourse) and speaks, not of the Jesus of the past, but of his own Christian community and the exalted Lord of the present.⁸ The interpretative key to the Gospel is ecclesiology, rather than Christology, though the two are really inseparable. Writing his "covenant theology" (Bundestheologie), Matthew sees salvation-history undifferentiatedly as a qualitative whole: in reality, all is present (the time of the evangelist).

An intermediate position is adopted by J.D. Kingsbury.⁹ He concludes that salvation-history for Matthew consists of two epochs, "the time of Israel" which is preparatory to and prophetic of the coming of the Messiah, and "the time of Jesus (Messiah)" which, from Matthew's point of view, extends from the beginning of the ministry of John and of Jesus himself, through post-Easter times to the coming consummation of the age. Though "the time of Jesus" contains various stages (past, present, future) these should not be regarded as qualitatively different (Matthew's own age, for example, the time of the church, is an extension or sub-category of the time of Jesus), nor should they be ranged along a scale of increasing eschatological intensity. Frankemölle, according to Kingsbury, is wrong in contending that Matthew dissolves past history into present concerns. The evangelist does distinguish historical stages within the epoch of Jesus (e.g. the days of Jesus, the time following Easter, the consummation), but these do not differ in eschatological intensity: to claim that they do simply does not fit the relationship Matthew establishes between the days of Jesus and the time following Easter.

In approaching the question of historical perspective in Matthew's Gospel, it is helpful, in my view, to realise that the evangelist operates, as it were, with two levels of discourse. There is a level of narration, grounded in tradition and embodying an historical perspective on the

past, though it is seen through faith and hence idealized. But there is also in Matthew a second level which makes this past narrative relevant to the needs of the evangelist's own community. Although neither level of discourse is ever totally absent, in some contexts one level may take precedence over the other, and the Gospel will slip imperceptibly from one to the other (as in chapter 18). To canonize relevance, or in other words, to read Matthew from an exclusively ecclesiological viewpoint, is to fall into Frankemolle's exaggerated assessment of Matthew as narrative-fiction, with no interest in the past as past. On the other hand, those from whom the Gospel's overriding function is to give the reader a theological perspective on history can stress the christological to the neglect of the ecclesiological: for instance, Strecker claims that Matthew presents no explicit understanding of the church.

Jesus' Death in Matthew's Theology of History

In my view, Kingsbury does not satisfactorily reckon with Matthew's historical perspective. By reason of his stress on Christology, he can say that "What is constitutive of Matthew's concept of the history of salvation.....is the abiding presence of Jesus with his disciples both 'then' and 'now'".¹⁰ But, in effect, that means that there are no longer, strictly speaking, periods within salvation-history, for God's kingdom becomes present with equal and unchanging intensity. However, if we are to do justice to Matthew's concern with ecclesiology, we shall see that the radical shift from Israel to the Christian community represents a new, more intense presence of the Kingdom. To J.P. Meier's claim that the death/resurrection of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel not only inaugurates the "time of the church" but marks "die Wende der Zeit...¹¹ the earth-shaking beginning of the new aeon..." , Kingsbury responds¹² by observing

that the difficulty with this view is that it places the days of Jesus, the period of the church and the consummation on a graduated scale of eschatological intensity, a schema which does not (in his opinion) fit the relationship Matthew establishes between the days of Jesus and the time following Easter. But the latter is no more than a hypothesis put forward by Kingsbury himself: failure to fit it does not make the schema of increasing eschatological intensity anything more than merely inconvenient, and 'inconvenient' does not mean 'wrong'. It would be surprising if the arrival of the new age was not a moment of greater eschatological intensity than any moment or period prior to it. (The trouble, of course, is with the word "eschatological", and its extremely wide-ranging use).

It is loyalty to his own hypothesis that makes Kingsbury mishandle the position of R. Kratz in his book Auferweckung als Befreiung.¹³ Kratz argues that, by reason of the Matthean insertion concerning the raising of the saints (27:52-3), it is the death of Jesus in the first Gospel that inaugurates the "end-time". To this claim Kingsbury replies: "This position however, flies in the face of the eschatological implications of a passage such as 1:23 and also ignores the fact that already in 11:5 Matthew writes of Jesus that 'dead are raised'". Whatever may have to be admitted of "God with us"-and I suspect that in this connection the word "eschatological" is being used with a quite distinctive significance - the raising of the dead mentioned in 11:5 (although a pre-figurative sign) cannot be equated, in eschatological value, with 27:52: the former is mere resuscitation and entails dying again: the latter is "resurrection" as the sign of the new age. Kingsbury has become a prisoner of his prejudice against there being any difference in eschatological intensity between the various stages within "the epoch of Jesus". But surely - and we are trying to view the matter from the standpoint of Matthew - the consummation of the age will have a greater eschatological intensity, a greater awareness of "end-ness", than the present?

It is often said that there is a vagueness in Matthew's Gospel as to the exact moment or event that brings about the turning-point of the age,¹⁵ the decisive shift in God's economy. O.H.Steck locates the imprecision in Matthew's attempt to effect a joint between two disparate strands of tradition: a Palestinian tradition which maintains that Israel's exclusion is due to its opposition to Christian preachers, and a Hellenist tradition in which the exclusion results from opposition to the Son sent by God. Matthews, however, is no naive copyist of disparate elements. True, Matthew sees Israel's obduracy as a totality: John the Baptist, Jesus himself, the disciples, all preach the same Kingdom and all meet the same opposition. The three parables of Matt. 21:28-22:14 bring out this unrelenting obstinacy with clarity: yet even there the accent falls on the central parable (the wicked Tenants) and on the killing of the son. In assessing Matthew's theology we must reckon with the central importance of Jesus' death/resurrection. The same death that crowns the chosen people's rejection effects as well God's decisive in-breaking, the earthshaking beginning¹⁶ of the new age. I am aware that Robert Gundry takes an entirely different view of the significance of our pericope, 27:51-53. In his opinion, Matthew does not want to show that the end has come, or begun, with Jesus' death and resurrection: he wants only to show a preview of the end which will guarantee the hope of those who suffer in the way of righteousness: the apocalypse is a way of encouraging persecuted disciples. But, even if the encouragement of disciples is a feature of Matthew's passion narrative (as it is in Mark), the presence of that motif is utterly insufficient to account for the compilation and introduction of this highly-charged apocalyptic pericope.

Jesus' Death and the Advent of the Kingdom.

For Matthew "the kingdom of God" is central to Jesus' preaching, and for Matthew the concept

contains a two-fold internal tension: above/below and now/some day. God's sovereignty must be realised on earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6:10). Here the evangelist aligns himself with Jewish theology. But in union with the Synoptic tradition Matthew looked forward to the future - the completely new and unforeseeable - inbreaking of God's kingdom. That "kingdom" (or "experienced sovereignty") - always somehow present throughout salvation-history, and unifying both Testaments - admits to more intense degrees of realisation. Through his redaction, that is, through his adding the apocalypse of 27:51b-53, Matthew takes the theological position that the climactic moment in this in-breaking is Jesus' death/resurrection. "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God'". The Gentile community has become believers and the universal mission commanded at the end of the Gospel by the risen Lord (28:16-20) is realised, prophetically, at the cross. Thus the union of death and resurrection as one event is again stressed, the one apocalyptic event which brings in the Kingdom decisively and in power.

Notes

1. Whichever curtain is implied, that before the Holy Place or that before the Holy of Holies, the 'sign' is that the death of Jesus, in some way, puts an end to the sacrificial cult of the Temple.
2. J.W. Wenham, "When were the saints raised? A Note on the Punctuation of Matthew xxvii 51-53", JTS 32(1981) pp.150-152.
3. E. Schweizer, The Good News according to Matthew (ET; SPCK, London, 1976), p.515.
4. Cf. W.G. Essame in Expos. Times 76 (1964-65) p.103.
5. G. Strecker, Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit (FRLANT 82: Göttingen, 1971).

6. Strecker, Der Weg, pp.45-49, 184-88. Other scholars who see Matthew as dividing the history of salvation into three epochs (the times of Israel, of Jesus, and of Matthew or of the church) are W. Trilling, Das wahre Israel (StANT 10: München, 1964, pp.95f., 162 and 213; R. Walker, Die Heilsgeschichte im ersten Evangelium (FRLANT 91: Göttingen, 1967), pp.114f., and W.G. Thomson, "An Historical Perspective in the Gospel of Matthew", JBL 93 (1974)
7. H. Frankemölle, Jahwebund und Kirche Christi (NTAbh 10: Münster, 1974).
8. Jahwebund, pp.143, 190, 203f., 257f., 268, 351, 377 and 398.
9. J.D. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom (SPCK: London, 1976), pp.25-39.
10. Matthew, pp.35-36.
11. J.P. Meier, "Salvation History in Matthew: In Search of a Starting Point", CBQ 37 (1975), pp. 203-215 (quotation from p.207): the view is repeated in Meier's The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel (Paulist Press, New York, 1979), pp.204-205 and in Matthew (NT Message 3: Glazier, Wilmington, 1980), pp.351-352. Cf. also the similar approach of D. Senior, "The Death of Jesus and the Resurrection of the Holy Ones (Mt.27:51-53)", CBQ 38 (1976), pp.312-329.
12. Kingsbury, Matthew, p.34.
13. R. Kratz, Auferweckung als Befreiung (SBS 65: Stuttgart, 1973), pp.43-44. Cf. Kingsbury, Matthew, p.34 note 136.
14. Kingsbury, Matthew, p.35 (still in note 136)

Hill, Matthew, IBS 7, April 1985.

15. O.H. Steck. Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

16. R.H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art (Eerdmanns: Grand Rapids, 1981) ad. loc. (p.575)

At the beginning of the fifth century the Roman Empire was in disarray due to internal tensions and to external pressure from barbarian invaders from the East. In an attempt to consolidate the core of the Empire Roman legions were withdrawn from the frontier regions in north and west Europe, and, in particular, from Britain. This manoeuvre did not in the end secure the central area of the Empire and it was not long before Gothic armies were at the gates of Rome itself. Moreover, the Angles and Saxons swept along northern Europe and crossed into Britain.

These invaders did not come into desolated regions. Though the Roman armies had withdrawn the native people remained and amenities such as Roman roads survived. There was also the Church which since the time of Constantine had been spreading and increasing in wealth. In Britain, the natives, including the Christians, tended to retreat before the Saxon invaders into the Celtic fringe where the Church persisted and developed its own provincial ways of worship and life and also adapted its form of government to suit the tribal system. Church life was centred in the monasteries; the people of the tribe worshipped in the monastic churches and the monks attended to the pastoral needs of the people.

On the Continent, there was no similar option of withdrawal and the Church's life and worship was maintained under barbarian rulers who were at times hostile to the Church, but it was not long before these rulers found it to their advantage to patronize the Church. Some of these rulers had already encountered and embraced an Arian form of Christianity. Marriages to Christian princesses, as when the pagan Clovis married Chrotochildis, often led to greater scope for the Church. Queens, such as Radegundis, gained renown for their support for new monasteries and nunneries. Strange as it may seem, it was the monastic strand in Church life which, though dedicated to renunciation of the world, proved to be a powerful and stabilizing influence as the barbarian kings sought to renew and

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impose an ordered society.

Moreover, the remote Celtic Church had not lost its sense of kinship with the Church on the Continent and this led to a remarkable outburst of missionary zeal which took Columba to Iona in 563, Aidan to Lindisfarne in 635, and Columbanus to Europe as early as 590. These pioneers saw themselves as voluntary exiles from Ireland for the sake of Christ and the spread of the Gospel. Columbanus founded a number of monasteries and he annoyed some European bishops by bringing his own Irish bishop with him and incorporating him into his monastic system as was the Irish custom. It would, however, be incorrect to regard him as an unwelcome intruder into an area provided with Benedictine monasteries. The field was open for those who could gather a community and secure the support of powerful patrons, whose gifts of land and money made monastic foundations possible. As yet each monastery was autonomous; the abbot devised its rules, laying down some of his own and borrowing from others, as others also drew from him. Columbanus soon won the respect of Merovingian kings who were emerging as strong Frankish rulers; he also influenced other monasteries by his emphasis upon penitential severity, biblical learning and evangelical preaching.¹

The civilizing process was slow and imperfect. Professor Wallace-Hadrill says that as Kings and church pioneers began to collaborate "the sword was the greatest converter of all"; after the sword came tithes, and after tithes "some glimmering of Christianity in Germanic guise and a hint of a new social morality."² Monastic leaders themselves were often bellicose figures and their biographers often incorporated gruesome tales as evidence of their special sanctity; biographies without a liberal sprinkling of the miraculous had a poor circulation and were not counted worth copying,³ but Wallace-Hadrill says that Columbanus was so big a character that he could not be wholly buried under the weight of miracles attributed to him by his biographer, Jonas of Bobio.⁴

Monasteries were prone to deterioration; indeed,

"no part of the Church was more liable to go astray without supervision than were the monasteries" ⁵ but the ideal was never abandoned and constant attempts were made to organise more uniform and closely-knit monastic systems which would prevent decay. Such a reform was well under way at the beginning of the ninth century under Charlemagne, the Frankish king whose family had eclipsed the Merovingian dynasty and who himself sought to bring all monasteries in his kingdom under the full Benedictine Rule. Even now, Irishmen were to be found in the Frankish Church and Wallace-Hadrill and Bieler both emphasize the Irish contribution to the rebuilding of Europe and the expansion of the Church and both ⁶ emphasize the contribution of John Scotus Erigena.

John lived from about 810 to 877; at that time Scotus meant Irish and John emphasized his Irishness by signing himself Erigena, a scion of Ireland. Wallace-Hadrill thinks he must have been trained in an Irish monastery, but Bieler contents himself with saying little is known of his origins. ⁷ The vigorous world of biblical, theological and philosophical studies which had been flourishing in Europe since the days when Alcuin of York was Charlemagne's minister of education was a magnet which still drew Irishmen. Moreover, life in Ireland was being seriously disrupted by the increasing tide of Norse invasions and this was an incentive to scholarly priests to look to other fields. John Scotus went to Europe about 850 and made his way to the Palace School at the court of Charles the Bald, a grandson of Charlemagne. Another Irishman, Martin, was master of the school; he was devoted to the canonical life and was interested in the liberal arts and in grammar, especially Greek, and he may have assisted John's entry into the school. He may have had some contact with the cathedral school at Laon but scholars now think he did not settle at that school; indeed, he may have visited several schools, but he was astute enough to keep close to Charles whom he ⁸ tried to encourage to see himself as a philosopher-king.

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John Scotus's scholarly ability brought him to the notice of Archbishop Hincmar of Reims by whom he was asked to refute a work by Gottschalk, a turbulent monk, who had set forth an unqualified doctrine of double predestination to eternal life or to damnation. John, in his De Praedestinatione, dealt trenchantly with Gottschalk, calling him a heretic, a madman and a blasphemer, and certainly refuting his arguments, but he did so by methods which led many, including Hincmar, to suspect John's own orthodoxy. He held that since God existed in eternity and not in time there could be neither before nor after in God's calculations and therefore there was neither single nor double predestination.⁹ This unexpected line of argument may have disturbed his readers but he could not be ignored. His knowledge of Greek was shown in his new translation into Latin of Celestial Hierarchy by pseudo-Dionysius, a treatise which had been sent as a gift from the Emperor in the East to the Emperor in the West in 827, and by his translation of Ad Thalassium by Maximus the Confessor.¹⁰ His greatest work was Periphyseon, "a perfectly original theological synthesis"¹¹ which made him rank as "the greatest thinker of the early middle ages."¹² This work begins from a study of the early verses in the Book of Genesis and purports to be an exposition of Scripture but spreads out into a massive treatment of the doctrines of God, creation, and human redemption and destiny.¹³

The renown of this work has overshadowed his two briefer and more theological writings which suffered such long neglect that there has been much debate as to whether or not they are properly attributed to John. The first is a mutilated exposition of the Gospel of John which is in the cathedral library at Laon; this covers parts of chapters 1, 3, 4 and 6 and has been described by Wallace Hadrill as "the jewel of Latin rhetoric and philosophy of the early middle ages."¹⁴ The second is a Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John which is in the civic library at Laon but which does not bear its author's name. The editor of the most recent edition, Edouard Jeuneau, has shown that attributions to Origen, to Gregory Nazianzus and to Chrysostom cannot be upheld, and he has given convincing evidence from its style, vocabulary and content

to prove that it is by John Scotus.¹⁵ The Commentary and the Prologue can be taken together to give a coherent account of his theological teaching. In expounding the Gospel of John he makes references to many other parts of the Bible but he is also indebted to Church Fathers, Augustine being the most frequently quoted, and there are echoes of the allegorical methods of Origen and the more literal approach of Jerome.

His framework of thought is orthodox Trinitarianism with special stress upon the unique revelation of God in Christ, perfect man and perfect God who became incarnate for the salvation of mankind. Scotus sees John as a mystic eagle who soars to the realities which are beyond full understanding (intellectum); he has been privileged to penetrate the mysteries of the sovereign God.¹⁶ Peter was a man of faith and action who went to the tomb of Jesus and ventured in in faith and who confessed that Jesus was the Christ; John was a man of contemplation who moved beyond faith to understanding and rose to the higher knowledge that "in the beginning was the Word". Paul was lifted up to the third heaven, but John has been lifted above every heaven to the cause of all things, to the Word by which all things were made.¹⁷ God, whom no person has seen, has been revealed. Scotus says that in the Old Testament there are frequent occasions when people were said to have seen God and, if this is so, how then can it be said that no one has seen God? Scotus refuses to take refuge in the explanation that while God the Father has not been seen the Son and the Holy Spirit have been seen; God, the Holy Trinity, is one God and is beyond the grasp of human understanding, and therefore to be seen, as the Gospel says he has been seen, he must have assumed a form capable of being recognized. The Holy Spirit took the form of a Dove, but when Christ came he wore no disguise; he took flesh and became man.¹⁸ The Word was not spoken by an angel to angels or to men, but by a man to both angels and men, by a man, not in phantom form but in the true humanity which he assumed.¹⁹

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The cause of this incarnation was God's love for mankind, but why should God love mankind? Scotus holds that God created all things and has left his imprint upon his creation and ultimately all things will be taken back into God from whom they came. Human beings as they now are are not fit to be in the presence of God but God has not abandoned them; it was for their restoration that Christ came. However, if they have been created by God, how have they come to be in their present condition? There is a harmony and variety in the created order and this can be a pointer to the harmony and variety in the person and purposes of God, but people have lost the power to see this harmony and variety, though Scotus never quite abandons the belief that man even as he is has not completely lost all light to trace the creator's hand in his works.²⁰

Scotus is much troubled about the meaning of the Fall of man. He cannot avoid the thought that no person before Christ has ever lived perfectly on this earth and so he suggests that human beings were created in a heavenly paradise where they disobeyed God and were then sent to this earth as a punishment and as a discipline. Scotus sees Adam as a general name for every person and all are now in darkness, having lost the light of paradise; Isaiah and Paul are also cited as witnesses to this darkness. It is in the words of Scripture that we can be pointed to an understanding to recognise the Word, but even a study of the forms and beauties of the sensible world will point to the same Word, 'to him who made all things because he is all things.' Indeed, every human being is capable of participating in the light of heavenly wisdom since God has not abandoned him. Nevertheless, there is no minimizing the human plight; this is seen in every facet of life. Even the division into male and female was not part of God's plan for people but was part of the penalty of being removed into this world and would disappear in the final restoration when there would be neither marriage nor giving in marriage.²¹

Scotus asks what light can come to human beings who are born to die and to fall into turmoil and misery and what can it mean to say that the true light was lighting

"every man that comes into the world" when so many never seem to see the true light. He takes the phrase "every man that cometh into the world" to mean those who by the grace of baptism and by rebirth into the light of wisdom and life have chosen to turn from being children of men to be children of God. He also takes "every man" to mean the whole man (*homo omnis*), the man who lives in both worlds of flesh and spirit; such men are in light. The world into which such men come is neither the perfect world of pure spirits nor the world of visible and corporal things but the world where the two worlds of body and soul come together,²² where human decision and divine grace come together. Those in this world are those who receive the Word and believe it; the Arians received him as a person but they did not go on to believe on his name as the only-begotten son of God, consubstantial with the Father.²³

Christ has become the first citizen of this world; his divine nature has assumed human nature as it was in paradise before the Fall. This thought fits in with Scotus's Realist philosophy that the perfect template which is the pattern of individual human beings exists in the mind of God and it was this which Christ assumed thus joining himself to the solidarity of the human race and providing the bridge by which men can be brought back to their true sonship. Indeed, Scotus speaks of men becoming gods, being deified: this also is in line with strands of his teaching which indicate that God is the only reality and that all things capable of returning to him will eventually return to him. His philosophical system has little or no place for an eternal world of the Devil and damned souls and this was one of the reasons for the suspicions which surrounded him in his own day when the fear of damnation was a major feature of preaching and art.²⁴

Life in Christ and growth in obedience are central themes in Scotus's teaching. The process of restoration is being carried on by Christ who dies

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daily in his faithful people and is crucified by them until they destroy their evil thoughts, even their imperfect spiritual thoughts and raise themselves towards true knowledge. The completion is as yet a hope, not a reality. Jesus has returned to the Father and he takes with him those whom he saves, taking them now by faith but in hope of the vision face to face. The journey from faith to perfect vision is a process of healing. Christ was raised, as was Moses's serpent, to deliver from their sins those who are perishing through the poisoned stings of evil serpents. In baptism the penalty due to sin is removed but the flaw of original sin remains: "it is one thing to remove the arrow²⁵ from the wound, it is another thing to heal the wound." In baptism water washes the flesh, but this must be followed by the invisible gift of faith which comes on the wind of the Spirit; no one knows the degree²⁶ of perfection to which it will lead, but Christ knows.

This change is a new birth. Scotus brings forward the teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus that there are four births: the birth of the human race in paradise, the birth into this world as the consequence of sin, the new birth due to grace which marks the beginning of the return to true humanity, and the birth into eternal life at death. The new birth due to grace is an essential step into the Kingdom of God. Scotus enumerates four possible senses of this Kingdom: the Church of the faithful, the company of the celestial spirits, the kingship of the Son of God, and the vision of truth; this vision is the sense which Scotus prefers.²⁷

Within this framework of thought Scotus deals with particular aspects of the Gospel story: the ministry of John the Baptist, the encounters with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria and the feeding of the five thousand.

Scotus says that when John the eagle turns to John the Baptist there is a descent from the peaks of theology to the valley of history but even there there

are historical, moral, scientific and theological meanings to be discerned. John was a shining light indeed but what light he had was a wavering light compared with the light which came in Christ; he was a man while Christ was at the same time God and man.²⁸ The Baptist said Jesus was before him; Scotus says this could not mean that he was before him in time since John was born before him; he takes it to mean that Jesus came before men, face to face, and in his presence John knew that he was not worthy to be in his presence, and unworthy to undo the lace of his shoes. The shoe could be the flesh of Jesus in which the Word was bound, or it could signify the Holy Scripture in which the imprint of Jesus's feet are seen. Since there are two feet, one can be taken to mean the natural reason discernible in the created word, the other the spiritual knowledge wrapped up in the Scripture.²⁹ John the Baptist saluted Jesus as the Lamb of God; Scotus says a lamb produces wool, milk and meat and so Christ clothes the believers with virtues, nourishes them with the truth and sustains them through divine contemplation. John had baptised at Bethany beyond Jordan and this sets Scotus off on an allegorical detour. He says there is another Bethany near Jerusalem where Jesus often stayed in the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The first Bethany prefigures the unfallen human nature which Jesus assumed; the second signifies a nearness to paradise, symbolised by Jerusalem and to which the believer hopes to come. Again, the first prefigures the sacrament of Baptism, the second the Lord's Supper, Jerusalem the hope of glory. Or, the progression can be seen as the illumination of faith, education by hope³⁰ and approach to the divine vision through charity.

The fertility of Scotus's allegorical outlook often centres around Jerusalem. When he is expounding the encounter with the woman of Samaria he gives Jerusalem a much less favourable significance; it is the place where Jesus drew a few of those who live by the letter of the Law; Jesus then went to Samaria

where there are Gentiles who live by natural law and moved on to Galilee which stands for those who grasp the spiritual sense.

Jesus sat at the well and it was the sixth hour when the woman of Samaria came to draw water. This sixth hour is the sixth age of the world. The first was the period from the expulsion from paradise up to the time of Noah, the second up to the time of Abraham's readiness to offer Isaac, the third up to the time of David in Jerusalem, the fourth up to the rebuilding of the temple in the time of Zerubbabel, the fifth up to the baptism of Jesus by John or perhaps to death of Christ on the Cross, and the sixth the present age when the grace of Christ has been bestowed as a prelude to the seventh age which already exists for those in heaven³¹ and will reach its fulness in the general resurrection. Then, after Jesus has talked to the woman he told her to go and fetch her husband. This provides Scotus with the opportunity for a typical medieval disparagement of woman. The woman is to go for her husband because without her husband she is not a complete person. She is one of those who want to fill their vessels with the enjoyment of temporal and corporal things, but at least she knows she has a need; she asks "give me". She has a reason focussed on created things but she needs the interior sense, the apprehension of God, and it is her husband who has the intellect to grasp this. There is a hierarchy from the wife up to the husband up to Christ up to God and Scotus cites Paul's verdict that the head of a woman is her husband. Turning to the five husbands, Scotus dismisses the view that these signify the five books ascribed to Moses; the Law was given to Jews and not to Samaritans. He then looks at the idea of Augustine that the five stand for five stages of life from childhood and all bound to the five senses and few get beyond this to the stage of true understanding; the woman's sixth husband is not even her true husband. Or, there is the teaching of Maximus the Confessor who saw the five husbands as five general laws given to mankind; the first was the command given in paradise not to eat the fruit of the tree; the second was the command to go and multiply after being expelled from paradise; the third was

the command to make the ark; the fourth was to divide the earth among the survivors of the flood; the fifth was the institution of the practice of circumcision. All these were preludes to the law of Moses but even this was not the true husband. Jesus brought the woman into the kingdom of grace and when she recognised him she left her pitcher and went to tell the news, and here she is a type of the Church and of human nature which when it recognises the presence of the Word made flesh leaves its carnal practices.³²

In the story of the feeding of five thousand allegory takes over. Jesus lifted up his eyes to see the multitude and this prefigures the whole world running to the faith of Christ, and also the lifting of our eyes above the worldly thoughts to the heights of contemplation there to receive divine sustenance. Philip said two hundred denarii were insufficient to buy enough to feed the multitude; two hundred might be thought ample for most purposes since ten is a perfect number; multiplied by ten it is even more perfect, and then multiplied by two more perfect still, but this height of rational calculation is not enough. Philip had not been nourished on the solid meat of faith and knowledge and had not reached perfect contemplation. The lad with the loaves was a type of Moses who had not been able to attain full maturity. The five loaves can signify the first five books of the Bible, but they can also mean the five bodily senses and Scotus says that anyone who is satisfied with what is apprehended by these five senses is on the level of a beast, but whoever is nourished with spiritual food becomes a rational being. The two loaves are the two Testaments, though some have taken them to signify the Prophets and the Psalms. The grass on which the people sit down is the spread of carnal thoughts but it is possible to move on from looking at the visible creation to the peaks of contemplation. The number of 5000 has a rich meaning for Scotus; it is the cube of the perfect number ten enhanced five times and thus stands for all those who now live according to the flesh but who, when instructed by the sacred history in Scripture and by the lessons of the visible creation rise to spiritual things,

or rather take hold of what Christ offers and are nourished by him. The remaining fragments can be seen as the subtle and difficult senses of the Scriptures with which the doctors of the Church have to wrestle. Or, the twelve baskets of fragments can be seen as the harvest of good works which follow the feeding. Scotus says others have seen the twelve as the ten commandments and the two laws of love to God and neighbour. If the fragments were not to be lost they would still have to be eaten; for some the fragments will be the tales of historic events which are sufficient sustenance for some; for others they will be the theological meaning of the tales and will lead to spiritual understanding.³³

If Scotus wrote a commentary on the whole Gospel and if it had survived it would doubtless have contained further fascinating allegorical flights since most of his flights take place within the orbit of a fixed and mostly orthodox framework they usually are instructive and edifying, yet attempts to make similar flights today are not attempted by serious commentators, not even by devotional commentators like William Temple and Lesslie Newbigin. There are many reasons for this. First, the history of the formation of the text and the variations in manuscripts discourage any idea that the words of the Gospel are cryptic codes for esoteric meanings. Second, it does not seem likely that Jesus and those who handed on his message intended to wrap up its main content in codes subject to arbitrary interpretation. Third, it has so often happened that allegorical flights have gone far beyond the bounds of a defensible framework of faith and strayed into strange aberrations.

The outcome is, of course, that commentaries are nowadays much less exciting than were those of patristic and medieval writers; tedious expositions meander amid lush growths of textual apparatus and footnotes. All this is indeed necessary for students of the Bible who want to grasp how the Gospel was formed, what it meant to the writers and to the first readers, what it has meant to subsequent readers, and then to see what it can mean for our day. Would that this could be done with something of the verve, penetration, imagination, and practicality displayed by John Scotus Erigena.

Notes:

1. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, The Frankish Church (1983), ch.IV. See also L. Bieler, Ireland, Harbinger of the Middle Ages (1963) and T.O. Fiaich, Columbanus in his own words (1974)
2. Wallace-Hadrill, op.cit., p.379
3. Ibid, p.88
4. Ibid, p.10 and 78-79
5. Ibid, P.59
6. Ibid, p.369-377. See also Bieler, op.cit., but J. Marenbon thinks that Bieler's estimate is over enthusiastic: Early Medieval Philosophy 480-1150(1983), p.176.
7. Wallace-Hadrill, op.cit.,p.369. See also Bieler, op.cit.
8. Wallace-Hadrill, op.cit.,p.246. J. Marenbon, From the circle of Alcuin to the school of Auxerre (1981), pp.109-114.
9. Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, pp.56-57. Hincmar pretended the work was a forgery.
10. Ibid, p.169 and 59.
11. John Scotus, Omelia Iohannis Scoti.ed. Edouard Jeaneau (1969), Intro. p.42
12. Margaret Deanesly, A History of the Medieval Church, p.168.
13. Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy, p.60ff. While acknowledging the greatness of this work, Marenbon points out certain confusions in its arguments.
14. Wallace-Hadrill, op.cit., p.372
15. John Scotus, op.cit., Intro.pp.51-60.
16. PL122 (all future references are from this volume) 283 D
17. 284 B - 285 C. "Pater loquitur: Verbum gignitur; omnia efficiuntur."
18. 290A. "Lux hominum est dominus noster Iesus Christus" 330A. "Christo autem, qui est caput ecclesiae, non ex mensura dat deus spiritum"

19. 289D
20. 321A. "Dilectio itaque patris causa est humanae salutis"
289C. "Scripturae apices et creaturae Species"
290C. "Capax ac particeps lucis sapientiae"
21. References to the darkness in Isa. 9:2 and Eph.5:8
310C-D. "Nomine Adam omnem generaliter naturam humanum significari accipimus"
22. 293A-B. "Hoc enim in arbitrio hominis et cooperatione gratiae constitutum est"
23. 294B
24. 295C. "De hominibus facit deos qui de deo fecit hominem"
296B. "Accepimus gratiam deificationis pro gratia fidei qua in eum credimus, et actionis qua mandata eius custodimus"
25. 312B. 313D. "Aliud est enim sagittam auferre de vulnere, aliud postea vulnus sanare"
26. 315B -318C. "Ipse est enim sapientia quae nec fallit nec fallitur"
27. 315A - 316A.
28. 291B-C. 292A. "praecursor itaque domini homo fuit, non deus; dominus autem, cuius praecursor est, homo simul fuit et deus"
29. 306B - 307B
30. 307C - 309D. For the treatment of the Lamb, see 310A-B.
31. 333B
32. 333C - 339D
33. 341B - 346B.

The Daily Study Bible: Samuel, D.F. Payne (1982);
Chronicles, J.G. McConville (1984)
St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, £3.50 each

These two volumes in the Daily Study Bible series deal with two of the "historical books" of the OT. Each follows a similar pattern: a brief introduction, a conducted tour through the biblical book with the ARSV text printed in manageable sections (except 1 Chr.1-9) along with sufficient comment to help the reader to understand better what he has been reading and a short book list at the end for those who would like to take the matter further. The Samuel volume has two useful maps at the end.

Mr Payne reminds us that the author deals with three main personalities: Samuel, Saul and David covering more than a century during the course of what for better or worse "judge" is replaced by "king" and a monarchic system of government emerges which is to have a profound effect on the history and theology of Israel for the next four hundred years.....at least!

Samuel is but a part of a larger history (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) which was put together by someone (singular or plural) using various earlier documents. As the last recorded event of that larger history brings us to the mid-sixth century (37th year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah: 2 Kings 25.27) one assumes that it took its final shape later in that century. The original readers would thus be the Jews in Babylonian exile who have lost their land, their holy city and their temple and who, in their dejection, humiliation and confusion, must have been putting a larger question mark at the role - if not the very existence - of the people of God. This work was put before them, not just to record the events of Israel's past, but to try to show the exiles that God was still active and that there was still a job for his people to do, if they were willing to learn the lessons of the past. Mr Payne sums up those lessons as they appear in Samuel under four heads: 1. God is active in human affairs; 2. God's ultimate purposes are for the wellbeing of his people; 3. To fulfil his purposes God has designed appropriate leadership for his people, leadership whose best exemplar is David; 4. God is present with his people in various special ways.

The author stresses the fact that in Samuel God is in control, that nothing can thwart his purposes, but it is the theme of leadership on which he lays the greatest emphasis. "The books of Samuel provide above all a study in leadership...", the bad examples of such leadership to be avoided, the good to be followed - the former seen eg in Eli's sons, the latter above all in David. To take but one instance, in 2 Samuel 10. 1-19 we have the story of the degrading treatment meted out to David's servants by Hanun to whom they have come bringing David's condolences on the death of Hanun's father. David does all the right things but Hanun's conduct is despicable. "Here then we have two contrasting pictures of leadership. David is the honourable king following the dictates of conscience and the stipulations of a treaty. Hanun is the foolish leader who follows ill-natured and ill-conceived advice - and leads his nation into warfare and humiliation." David may often be the ideal leader but he too presents an example of leadership which should not be followed eg

in his treatment of Absalom and in particular in 2 Samuel 14,1-20 where Joab plants a wise woman among David's suppliants. "...David was beginning to show weakness in more than one respect. Good leadership requires not only shrewdness and wisdom but also the firmness to resist pressures both from close personal friends and from popular opinion."

There are many helpful approaches in this book - to mention but three others which I found stimulating!

1. The stuff of history! When we look at the history of nations we sometimes use only our "grand scale" spectacles through which we see massive empires replacing each other, great kings and heroes - more akin to gods than men - controlling the destinies of anonymous, non-descript, expendable subjects. When you read this book, however, you begin to realize that there is another perspective, that God often does his work in history in simple domestic contexts - a family going to the sanctuary on an annual pilgrimage, a woman yearning for a child, a devout priestly father with corrupt priestly sons; that this is the real stuff of history and that it is in and through such ordinary events that God is quietly working his purposes out.

2. The ability to combine scholarly competence with homiletical skill. Often difficult passages, or words rich in theological content, are carefully explained, followed by one or two straightforward lessons to help the reader in his own spiritual pilgrimage eg 1 Samuel 16.1-13. Here David is secretly anointed by Samuel, God's initiative is underlined, the mystery of election hinted at, the Holy Spirit's function in the OT (and NT) is outlined, some background material on kingship in the Ancient Near East presented. The role of the shepherd is related to this and, with a final reference to the disciples of Jesus, we are given this concluding comment: "Even a humble and ordinary occupation may be the most appropriate place of training for a man or woman destined to achieve great things as a Christian leader."

2. BC to AD. The big problem for the Christian commentator on the OT is to show that the OT has still a message for those living in the Christian context. Mr Payne avoids the temptation of finding a Christian truth under every stone, but he has no hesitation in constantly drawing lessons from his material for God's people today. We see this is the "similar situation" approach eg 1 Samuel 14.1-23. after dealing with the Michmash incident we have the comment "a timid few can achieve miracles if God is with them....So too the pitiful and frightened handful of disciples of Jesus went on to "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17.6) (cf also a word study on "Ichabod", linking the two testaments together or Nathan's prophecy (2 Samuel 7) or the slaying of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15))

Chronicles Dr McConville is dealing with a book which has never been particularly popular with the Christian. The seemingly endless lists of family relationships, singers, gatekeepers etc., cause readers to shy away, especially when these lists appear in such profusion in the early part of the book. Further much of the narrative in Chronicles can be found in much more attractive format in Samuel and Kings! Indeed our preference for these latter books has so conditioned us that if we find divergences from Samuel/Kings in Chronicles we tend to regard the latter material as less reliable. The Greek translators aided and abetted this

"aversion-therapy" by calling it Paraleipomenon, (The Book) of "Things Left Out", while the English translation of the uninspiring Hebrew title "The events of the days" - annals or Chronicles - has helped to ensure its consignment to the "archives" section of our minds.

The somewhat reluctant reader, therefore, is rather startled, or maybe delighted, when he reads in the Introduction "the Chronicler is no mere chronicler! He is a theologian, sharing with all the biblical writers the burden of interpreting God's ways to human beings." He is dealing with a community of God's people whose forefathers returned from exile. This community, living in a statelet in an extremity of the Persian empire (fourth century BC?), cannot help but be aware of their insignificance. They need to be reminded constantly not only that God is still on the throne but also that that same God is eager that his people should display a lifestyle worthy of their name. The Chronicler not only reminds them of these things. He also lays it on the line that those who repent and seek him He will bless, but that those who reject Him and prove faithless will find themselves rejected by Him.

Dr McConville begins with a brief treatment of the genealogies in the first nine chapters; the function of these genealogies "is to show that the promises and purposes of God continue." The reader is made aware of his past and because of God's commitment in that past is assured that he has not only a present but a future.

From chapter 10 to the end of 2 Chronicles the monarchy is subjected to theological scrutiny. In general, David and Solomon are held up as examples to be followed while Saul is to be seen as a warning. Saul's disobedience led to disaster while David and Solomon - in spite of occasional lapses - sought the Lord and were richly rewarded by Him. "Seeking the Lord" is a major theme in Chronicles for God is constantly meeting his people in worship as they seek him and though he is so great that not even the heavens can contain him, yet he causes his name to dwell in the Temple whose rightly ordered, properly organized worship provides the meeting place between God and his people and constitutes the real basis of a healthy joyful community - so long as that community, in particular its king, seeks the Lord.

The Chronicler gives no systematic account of the history of the Northern Kingdom, for he regards that kingdom as being in a state of rebellion against God. But the history of the Southern Kingdom provides sufficient examples to illustrate his principle - that those who seek the Lord prosper - eg Jotham, while those who are faithless like Saul fail eg Ahaz. Examples of those who are both faithless and faithful are given, Asa and Manasseh. The case of Manasseh raises questions about the divergences between Samuel/Kings and Chronicles. Where there are such divergences, is one account to be regarded as historically more reliable than the other? Dr McConville suggests that while the Chronicler has no hesitation in presenting the most positive picture possible by leaving out some of the warts, we must also accept that he had access to sources which the author of Samuel/Kings was unaware of or did not want to use. He sums up his approach to such questions in a concluding comment on the problem of Goliath: "The way of faith when confronted with perplexing phenomena in the Bible, is to

stand back, admit that fallibility, and trust that the Lord's word is indeed truth."

In a commentary full of good things four points require brief mention: 1. From student days one has tended to set the deuteronomic history over against the Chronicler's history as representing two rather different points of view. It is interesting, therefore, to see the large number of points of contact between Deuteronomy and Chronicles. 2. The emphasis on joy, the last thing one would expect in a book with such a joyless title! "The joy of the people of God is a motif in Chronicles". 3. Dr McConville shows us that we are not just dealing with "things left out" or with a dry chronicle. Instead he gives us a sense of the structure of the book, a structure which makes clear that the matters dealt with are all closely related as part of the pilgrimage of the people of God. 4. He shows us again and again the relevance of events in the book for our own Christian pilgrimage, admirably summed up on the last page but one of the commentary. "The Chronicler's desire for his people is that they rise above defeatism and see that the securing of a glorious future is within their grasp if they will only take the road of obedience."

Two first-class commentaries in a very fine series.

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J.S. McIvor

Delbert R. Hillers, Micah (Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. by Paul D. Hanson
Loren R. Fisher)
Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1983
pp 192 \$22.95, cloth

Although this is not the first volume of this commentary series to be reviewed in this journal (the second volume of Zimmerli's Ezekiel was reviewed in IBS 6, 138f), some general remarks about the series may yet be in order. Designed, according to its editorial foreword, for the serious student of the Bible, Hermeneia aims to utilize the full range of philological and historical tools and to make use of ancient Semitic and classical languages. The scope of the series is unusually broad: it will include volumes on apocrypha and pseudepigrapha as well as the canonical books; a volume on Ignatius of Antioch has been announced as being in preparation. An editorial policy of continual revision means that the published volumes will from time to time be revised, and eventually replaced, and the series thus kept up to date.

The first impression created by the commentaries in this series is of something strikingly different. The page size (8 1/4 inches tall by 9 1/4 inches wide) is unusual, as is the layout in double columns (although the biblical text is printed only in one column, extended sideways when line length requires). There is a positive virtue in this for it means that extensive critical notes can appear on the same two-page spread with the section of text under discussion, even though, inevitably, they often have to run on to succeeding pages as well. A variety of typefaces allows the translation (which, in the case of Micah, is Hillers own but no more different from other translations than might be expected

with a text as problematic as Micah), critical notes and commentary to be easily distinguished one from another.

Although some volumes in the series are translations of commentaries which have been previously published in other languages, the volume under review is an "original". Clearly, the sequence began with Wolff's Hosea, which was the first volume in the series, and continued with his Joel and Amos, is not to be maintained for the rest of the Twelve Prophets. Hillers' commentary on Micah is a very different one from Wolff's, for, whereas the latter sees the book of Micah as the end result of a long process of accretion to a core found in chapters 1-3 (though by no means embracing all of those chapters) and stemming from Micah himself, Hillers is sceptical about the appropriateness of the redaction-critical approach which Wolff employed.

Hillers prefers, to use his own words, "the promise that may lie in a synchronic approach to reading the book as arising for the most part out of one situation." He does not, however, propose simply to attribute the whole book to Micah. His suggestion is rather that the book consists largely of materials connected with a movement of protest and revitalization with which the prophet Micah was associated. While he admits that this suggestion is hypothetical and provisional, and that there is no more objective evidence for such a movement in eighth-century Judah than there is for the redaction-critical approach which he rejects, neither is there less evidence.

His proposal certainly deserves serious consideration. It will be interesting to see whether, and if so when, the editorial policy alluded to above will be applied to this commentary.

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D.R.G. Beattie

Edmund Hill, Being Human

Geoffrey Chapman, London 1984 pp336 £7.95

This is consciously a text-book for students, the third in a new series entitled "Introducing Catholic Theology". It is clearly based on lectures, written in an attractive and somewhat informal style and spiced with humour. It deals in a systematic way with various aspects of human nature viz man's beginnings, sin and original sin, soul and body, the significance of death, man as a real person, community, marriage, celibacy, woman's liberation, the unity and plurality of mankind, man in the image of God, judgment, heaven and hell. It closes with a very attractive picture of what Christians in the Church are called to become.

The sub-title is "A Biblical Perspective" and so much of the book expounds scripture and it does so because Father Hill is convinced that the Second Vatican Council pointed the Church to a review of its life, evoked by the modern understanding of scripture as well as the modern contact with men of other/

Christian denominations and of other faiths. In his biblical exposition the author bases his argument on variety within scripture eg the differing outlooks of the J and P documents in the Pentateuch. Similarly he expounds the relation between Adam and Christ and quotes with approval the view of Karl Barth that it is in Christ that one learns what human nature truly is.

At the same time he gives considerable place to the long tradition of the church's teaching on human nature and defends the catholic view that sin means a fall from a supernatural to a natural state rather than a fall from nature to subnature. But here Fr Hill also displays a modern freedom in his criticism of tradition. He examines critically the church's teaching on the fate of unbaptized children (82) and argues for the church's duty to members remarried after divorce (154). He believes in the right of women to hold high office in the church (178) and discusses the problem of its strict attitude to polygamy in Africa (156). This leads to a section on plurality of cultures and so the variety of church structures suitable for different peoples. He sees the church as primarily the local community and the universal church not as a monolith but as an institution expressing itself with great variety. This has not prevented him from receiving the nihil obstat and imprimatur.

At the end of each of his 24 chapters he provides a short bibliography and a useful set of questions for discussion.

The value of the book is its clear exposition of the historical material. There is eg an excellent section on the meaning of body, soul and spirit both in Greek and Hebrew thought. There are many accurate quotations from St Augustine and St Thomas, as becomes the work of a Dominican who has himself edited one of the Blackfriars volumes of the SUMMA. As Prior of St Nicholas's Priory at Stellingbosch Fr Hill not unnaturally illustrates many of his points on human nature and human shortcomings from events in South Africa.

This is a textbook which students will certainly find interesting. I suspect that some of their teachers will recommend at the same time works with more traditional interpretations of biblical passages and the teaching of the Fathers but if so the book will serve as a useful

stimulus to discussion.

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J.L.M. Haire

D. Senior & S. Stuhlmacher, The Biblical Foundations for
Mission
SCM 1983 pp371 £9.50

This is a valuable study for those who approach it from the side of missiology. It provides the biblical background for the work of bodies like the Conference of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association reporting in 1983: "Mission and its Future: A Vision." It is also valuable because the biblical exegete finds in it a consistent treatment of the Bible, as itself brought into being by the "missionary situation", in which both OT and NT had to speak and interpret the activity of God. One might equally entitle it "The Missionary Foundations of the Bible" and benefit from its insights. It draws on the best scholarship from both sides of the Atlantic as well as the Third World, showing that mission is not just telling the good news but entering fully into dialogue with the exigencies of the world situation. The theology underlying this has been current since the early 1960s especially in WCC (Mission in Six Continents - Mexico City 1963) and more recently in such evangelical gatherings such as give rise to "Wheaton '83 Letter to the Churches" on the nature and mission of the Church.

The authors are respectively Professor of OT and NT in the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. They believe that "the taproot of the church's universal mission can be traced within the OT" as much as in the new. The whole Bible throws light on the urgent questions of our time such as liberation of oppressed peoples, global justice and peace, pluralism in dogma and lifestyles, dialogue with Jews and people of other faiths or of none, the role of women in Church and community. The authors found that "approaching the bible from the vantage-point of mission led to the centre of its message" so a missionary hermeneutical device is

employed. "We want to search out those traditions and dynamics that shaped Israel's consciousness of its destiny in relation to Gentiles, and that ultimately led Christians to proclaim the gospel to Gentiles." That aim is kept constantly to the fore as each contributes his own special study and both join to offer their own conclusions in the last thirty pages - notably drawing out the implications for contemporary theology and church life. Of OT times Stuhlmuehler makes the usual division between six periods: Patriarchal Age (1850-1550 BC); Mosaic Age (1250-1200); Covenant/Davidic (1200-921); disintegration of kingdom and prophetic challenge (921-587); exile and call to re-creation (587-539); reconstruction and apocalyptic (539-537).

Each of these is systematically surveyed to reveal how secular forces shaped events to which God's people had to respond in differing situations as their history evolved under God in three stages each time. 1. Acculturation, sometimes involving violent struggle. 2. A long period of indigenization and adaptation. 3. Then a prophetic challenge to reform. The first stage formed a bridge-head; the second secured its roots and established religious reforms; the final stage brought about conditions of survival of a people with a faith and life more worthy of God's plan and hopes. The missionary engagement today will need the same progression from stage to stage. The dialectic between the election of the peculiar people and the universal sway and scope of commitment to one sovereign Lord of the whole earth and all peoples is well maintained. In ch.4 we have God's choice of Israel, set in a promised land, set apart ideologically and religiously from the other nations, yet not for privilege or landed prosperity for themselves but to be shared rather than hoarded. This came into focus eventually in 2 Isaiah in the Suffering Servant of the Lord and a truly universal commitment to all nations. Stuhlmuehler brings his opening section to a close with a lengthy study of the Psalms, "Israel's Prayer and Universal Mission". Here we have delight in one Lord; his saving, shepherding, judging activity, springing from the prophetic consciousness and influence,

"with earthiness and bluntness" raising "raw questions" about innocent suffering and vicious persecution, but dealing with these for the families of nations as well as for Israel. "Life and election rested on God's steadfast love, a basis for all people to become God's chosen ones."

Senior takes up the study of the NT foundation in part two. "While there are deep currents of continuity between the OT and NT on the issue of mission (as in so much else), there is also striking development. What previously had been prophetic intuition of God's favour to, and presence among, the nations would now become an explicit and dominant concern of the NT communities". David Bosch (professor of missiology in the University of S Africa) recently pointed out in an article in International Review of Mission on the scope of mission that "it is mainly in Anglo-Saxon Protestant missionary history that we find the consistent appeal to Matt 28.19. In continental missionary circles the appeal to the Great Commission has never occupied so central a position. In this regard we find that Senior's study is well balanced. He traces the kingdom ministry of Jesus with its eschatological, theological and soteriological character. He outlines the development of the mission story through Paul's mission/ministry as well as in all the other writings arising from it. All through he tries to keep before us the comprehensive scope of the kingdom theme as it "dissolves alienation and breaks down walls of hostility" and lays a real basis for a universal mission ie God's healing and renewing power over a life, all available and near to all his creatures.

The gospels each in its own life-setting illustrates this kingdom theme and saving acts for all nations. Paul's letters are to be read as if we were listening in to one person engaged in a phone conversation and having to assume what is being said at the other end! Paul was responding to the needs of various Christian communities, a fact useful for insight into the missionary task today - largely pastoral relations. Where are we to find the basic pad from which the Pharisee, Paul was launched into the task of apostle to the Gentiles? Was it his conversion experience alone? Paul preferred the term "calling" to describe the thrust in fellowship with the risen Lord, and through his dying and rising again, to bring life to all, whatever their race.

He was compelled to call others to "turn from idols to serve the living God" as he himself had been. Epistles such as Ephesians and Colossians give the scope of the cosmic lordship of Christ.

After two decades in which "Biblical Theology" has been somewhat in eclipse there should be a welcome for this kind of book. It makes a really substantial contribution to the wholeness of scripture as the foundation of our faith and mission to mankind. It also demonstrates the truth that theology, biblical or whatever, is to be "done" by bringing the issues of the contemporary scene face to face with the sources and eliciting deeper truth than could appear to us from a mere study of original texts as if they had little relevant contexts. It is significant also as the fruit of Roman Catholic scholarship now emerging after the long neglected or restricted engagement in bible study by that church.

Furthermore this book may well provide some of the tonic needed by any who may have found themselves or their denomination suffering from what M.A.C. Warren called the "terrible failure of nerve about the missionary enterprise." It illustrates with chapter and verse how the dangers and opportunities of the crises of our times may be articulated in terms well-known throughout the biblical era. It shows that the dialectical tension between worship and doubt, faith and fear may be interpreted alongside similar tensions in each period of our bible tradition.

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J.R. Boyd

Stephen Sykes, The Identity of Christianity

SPCK 1984 pp349 £15 cased £8.50 pb

In this age when we in the West are constantly in dialogue with men of other faiths, we are faced both with the question of what Christianity is and with the criticism

of our divisions and diversity. Is it possible to define the essence of Christianity? This is the question which Professor Stephen Sykes faces though he believes that it is more accurate to seek, not for the essence, but for the identity of so diverse an entity.

The central section of the book contains the answers proposed by the six nineteenth and twentieth century theologians: Schleiermacher, Newman, Loisy, Troeltsch and Barth. His detailed examination of the views of these writers, not only provides us with evidence of the diversity of possible answers, but usefully dispels many popular oversimplifications through which these authors often have been pigeonholed and so dismissed.

Sykes begins with three observations, based in his view on an examination of the traditions of the NT which will act as guides in assessing the solutions offered by these modern theologians. 1. From the beginning of Christianity there have always been a difference of opinion both in doctrine and in practice. 2. Orthodoxy, though a natural desideratum is not by itself an adequate criterion. There must also be inward commitment. 3. Because of difference of opinion and insincerity in commitment, there is need for authority. This however itself can be fallible.

The positions of the six theologians may be summarized (somewhat inadequately) as follows: For Schleiermacher, the essence lies in utter dependence on God in Christ from which all doctrines may be deduced. For Newman, when he had finally found his position, there is in the church a developed system of doctrine which, however, can only be grasped by "an inward impression". Harnack defines the "essence" as the acknowledged kingship of God, revealed in Christ as a God of love and forgiveness. For Loisy, it is essentially faith in God, in Christ, in forgiveness and in the Church. Barth, in Sykes' interpretation, makes the central thing the Word of God always - a new miraculous event and not simply a set of infallible propositions. Troeltsch is the odd man out who finally concluded that Christianity is simply the expression in Western culture of the human sense of the divine.

In face of this diversity of views Sykes writes three concluding chapters in which he examines the reasons why each of these theologians discussed the question of the essence of

Christianity; secondly, what kind of unity can be attained with so diverse opinions and, finally, what can be seen as binding Christians together.

The reason why modern theologians have looked for the essence of Christianity is not merely the search for the minimum common factors. It is a threefold desire to set out the faith in clear and simple terms, to indicate a "hierarchy of truths" and to pinpoint, if possible, a continuity throughout the ages.

In face of the great variety of views about what is essential Professor Sykes borrows Professor W.B. Gallie's idea of "an essentially contested concept." Christians acknowledge at the centre of their faith God in Christ, interpreting this variously. What binds them together is that they do this in worship with commitment. "The identity of Christianity consists in the interaction between its outward forms and an inward element, constantly maintained by participation in communal worship." (pp282-3)

This remarkable solution immediately raises the question. Is this not a kind of Anglican apologia for comprehensiveness? Does it adequately answer the question, what is the truth revealed in Christ which involves not only worship but the exclusion of serious error? Professor Sykes' position may well imply that we will always have to live with great diversity among Christians and can only have unity if at all by accepting such diversity. One would have liked him to have said something more about the problem of unity in the truth.

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J.L.M. Haire

J.I. Packer, Keep in Step with the Spirit

IVPress 1984 pp301 £4.95 pb

Dr J.I. Packer's, "Keep in Step with the Spirit" is an exciting book, relevant to the contemporary religious scene. It is an attempt at treading the controversial minefield of presentday understanding of the Holy Spirit with a view to leading the church to a more unified

experience of the Spirit in her living.

Dr Packer introduces his theme by means of an analogy to a meal, grouping his chapters as appetizer, soup, main course and dessert. It certainly tastes like a well prepared meal in the reading. More than that, it gives a satisfaction which helps the reader leave the table refreshed and reinvigorated spiritually.

The "appetizer" outlines the various views of the Holy Spirit's importance but focusses, as a priority, on a ministry where the Spirit reveals and glorifies Christ in the experience of the believer. This is the touchstone. The "soup" course reviews the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in scripture, both the OT and NT, noting the various aspects of this particular theology such as his personhood, work, gifts and Spirit-baptism.

The "main course" examines the concept of holiness. The Augustinian view is regarded as basic, the classic expression of biblical teaching. Wesleyan perfectionism is assessed in the light of scripture with a scrupulous fairness to Wesley's own presentation of his thinking and this is clearly distinguished from the somewhat dubious versions of his ideas propounded by his successors. Keswick teaching is expounded as a later modification of Wesley's position. In both these latter versions of holiness teaching, the concept of sanctification is seen to be central as a second work of grace, quite definitive in its nature, subsequent to conversion and sometimes described as a baptism of the Spirit.

The contemporary scene of charismatic Christianity is part of that "main dish" also. The movement is set against its historical background of Pentecostalism at the beginning of this century. Spirit-baptism, sign-gifts such as glossolalia, prophecy and healing as well as the development of the body-life of the church in vital Christian fellowship are all characterized as salient features of this fourth version of holiness. The advantages and drawbacks of the movement are noted and a positive review of these glean important lessons for the church universal.

Some significant features mark the author's presentation. An irenic spirit is continually in evidence. Dealing with matters potentially controversial Dr Packer is always calmly and helpfully reflective and objective. His basically

reformed stance on these and other subjects could be read by the most enthusiastic supporter of the charismatic movement without any feeling of offence.

This is not because issues are confused or problems avoided. The author clearly regards the tenor of all three versions of holiness - Wesleyan, Keswick and Charismatic - as misinterpretations of the biblical evidence and he inclines to the Augustinian view as normative of scripture. It is rather because of his judicious and balanced reasoning that this pacific note comes to the fore. He is sharply critical of extreme reformed positions where sign-gifts are consigned only to the apostolic era (with which contention the general drift of his reasoning would seem to concur) but with little or insufficient proof from scripture for this or of a 'one man ministry' to the neglect of the cultivation of the ministry of all believers, as he is of excesses of emotionalism on the charismatic scene.

His insight is penetrating and his reasoning logical, persistent and given in depth. In exegesis he asks the proper questions of the text but is careful of reading ideas into it that are not there. His plea for a "retheologizing" of the charismatic teaching on holiness, on the one hand, and his call for a vital and fresh review of many dead forms of orthodox worship and church life, on the other, force all of us to think again. But, then, this is the value of the book. The work is not only scholarly and well reasoned but practical and devotional. It seeks, as the author claims - and succeeds, as the reader will discover - to lead the Christian and the Church to experience that for which Robert Murray McCheyne prays, "Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be", ie to "keep in step with the Spirit".

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